



*The William and Flora  
Hewlett Foundation*

**COLLABORATIVE  
GOVERNANCE**

**A GUIDE FOR GRANTMAKERS**

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# *Collaborative Governance*

*A Guide for Grantmakers*

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## A C K N O W L E D G M E N T S

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Although collaborative governance's visibility and popularity is growing, it wasn't invented yesterday. We would like to thank all the funders, practitioners, and scholars who led (and continue to lead) the way. Thanks also to Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement and the Funders' Committee for Civic Participation for facilitating discussions on this topic, and to Martha McCoy and Pat Scully for commenting on the draft. Special thanks to Michael Falcone for editing assistance.

## F O R E W O R D

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Solving the most vexing problems that philanthropists address—from improving environmental quality to providing a quality education and strengthening disadvantaged neighborhoods—requires the collaboration and resources of many different players, including government, the private sector, community leaders, and other individuals.

The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation has supported the theory and practice of collaborative problem solving and consensus building across sectors. This work takes a variety of forms, including deliberation and dialogue, collaborations between government and organizations, and public dispute resolution processes. Particularly important are efforts to strengthen civic and political engagement among those whose voices have often been absent from public decisionmaking.

This is the third of three guides commissioned by the Hewlett Foundation to share lessons learned from its twenty years of funding conflict resolution and public participation. The first two publications focus on conflict resolution and collaborative process in the fields of environmental protection and community development. This third guide highlights the emerging area of collaborative governance, which applies across a range of social and political problems.

We hope that grantmakers will consider the possibilities of applying these approaches in their own work.

— *Paul Brest, President*  
*The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*

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## INTRODUCTION

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*“Collaborative Governance is a new level of social/political engagement.”*

*—Frank and Denie S. Weil*

This guide focuses on collaborative governance, an emerging set of concepts and practices that offer prescriptions for inclusive, deliberative, and often consensus-oriented approaches to planning, problem solving, and policymaking. Collaborative governance typically describes those processes in which government actors are participants and/or objects of the processes.

Here is how Frank and Denie S. Weil, program benefactors of the Weil Program on Collaborative Governance at the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, describe this field: “The essence of Collaborative Governance is a new level of social/political engagement between and among the several sectors of society that constitutes a more effective way to address many of modern societies’ needs beyond anything that the several sectors have heretofore been able to achieve on their own.”

This guide attempts to focus on the following questions:

- What are the characteristics of collaborative governance and what is the current status of these ideas-in-action?
- What specific case examples can illuminate these experiences and lessons learned?



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- What are some priority areas for further study, experimentation, and assessment in order to advance the knowledge and practice of collaborative governance?
- What guidance can we give to funders interested in this emerging field that could inform their own grantmaking?

### **What Is Collaborative Governance?**

- Thousands of residents gather in 21st Century Town Meetings<sup>®</sup> using new electronic tools to design the future of lower Manhattan after September 11, 2001.
- The Governor of Oregon works with local residents and other stakeholders to develop community strategies through a collaborative problem solving process called Oregon Solutions.
- In Delaware, a mediated dispute-resolution process helps environmental groups, corporations, and the government reach an agreement on how to regulate use of the state's coastal areas.
- Tens of thousands of citizens\* actively participate in a multiyear process to create and implement a new land use vision for Utah.
- In Hartford, Connecticut, representatives from 29 municipalities and the state government work together to negotiate a compact to provide affordable housing to low- and middle-income residents.

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- A group of ranchers, farmers, and environmentalists in Montana successfully resolve a long-standing dispute over instream uses of water in the state through a mediated, consensus-based process.
- Citizens in Rochester, New York, participate in planning and budgeting to develop capacity at the neighborhood level.

*Collaborative governance is about engaging citizens in making decisions in more inclusive ways.*

What these different activities have in common is that they are all part of an emerging movement across America toward collaborative governance. This movement actively engages citizens through the tools of dialogue and deliberation, community problem solving, and multi-stakeholder dispute resolution to inform and shape public decisions and policy.

Collaborative governance combines two basic concepts:

- **Collaborative:** To co-labor, to cooperate to achieve common goals working across boundaries in multi-sector relationships. Cooperation is based on the value of reciprocity.
- **Governance:** To steer the process that influences decisions and actions within the private, public, and civic sectors.

Although government plays a role in governance, it is not the only player. Collaborative governance is about the process of engaging citizens in making decisions in more inclusive ways.

### Why Is Collaborative Governance Important to Grantmakers?

Most grantmakers—indeed most people who work to make change in the world—



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*Grantmakers are interested in collaborative governance not only as an end in itself, but also as a means to an end.*

don't think of collaborative governance as their goal. Most grantmakers are trying to solve problems within specific issue areas and/or specific places. Achieving workable and sustainable solutions is difficult, given conditions such as multiple and diverse constituencies, battling and often inadequately informed stakeholders, mistrust across the board, and the resulting inaction and gridlock.

When asked to raise taxes for education, transportation, or health and human services, voters often say no. When asked to support affordable housing development or regulations to improve environmental quality, businesses often say no. When asked to contribute resources—whether time, money, political power, or expertise—to invest in the future, everyone asks “Why should I?”

This interest in solving problems and generating change within and among multiple sectors, polities, and populations is one driver of grantmakers' emerging interest in collaborative governance—not only as an end in itself, but also as a means to an end. In addition, interest in collaborative governance is driven by a concern for better informed and more engaged citizens, greater inclusivity in decisionmaking, more stakeholder involvement in community partnerships, improved methods and quality of deliberation, and greater accountability and trust in government. Certainly the growing alienation from the political process and the mistrust of local, state, and national governments by the public bode ill for the future of democracy.

Many funders hope that citizen participation in public decisions and policymaking—and the transparency and accountability that can result—will contribute to public confidence in government and the public's willingness to expand its “comfort zone” for new solutions and policy directions in which government plays a part. Although the

language of collaborative governance may be new, it builds on prior work and the current activity in a number of areas.

### **Collaborative Governance Promotes More Effective Civic Engagement**

Grantmakers who want to learn about the tools of collaborative governance because of their interest in civic engagement will find that there are unique and important opportunities to promote deeper and more sustained forms of civic engagement using collaborative governance approaches. John Gaventa of the Participation Group at the Institute for Development Studies, writing in the *National Civic Review*, describes the challenges of these new forms of participation:

On the one hand, attention must be given to strengthening the capacity of local citizens to exercise voice; at the same time, voice without responsiveness simply builds frustration. There is also the need to build and support the capacity of local governments and representatives to be responsive to community participants, and to learn how to change their roles, attitudes, and behaviors in the new environment.

Collaborative governance presents a promising holistic approach to civic engagement and public participation. It also provides an opportunity to embed governance systems and institutions with greater levels of transparency, accountability, and legitimacy.

This guide provides advice on how grantmakers can make civic engagement more effective, authentic, and sustaining through collaborative governance practices.

*“Perhaps our institutions created in democratic countries during the nineteenth and twentieth century are no longer adequate. If so, then democracies will need to create new institutions to supplement the old.”*

—Robert Dahl,  
On Democracy

### **Why Collaborative Governance Is Emerging: Some Claims and Concepts**

Why is the field of collaborative governance emerging today? At the most fundamental level, existing institutions cannot meet the rising aspirations and desires of residents. Traditional government structures, designed for an earlier era, are simply not adequate for the complex challenges of our modern economy and society.

Too often, community challenges and conflicts result in gridlock because of this lack of effective problem solving capacity. Business-as-usual, top-down approaches and interest group bargaining often fail to deliver effective responses to our more pressing problems. Citizens are increasingly frustrated with the inability of government to function effectively.

Earlier approaches were based on command-and-control “machine models” more appropriate for an industrial age. In the information age, we need new approaches to deal with rapid change and complexity. Consider the following:

- Information is now more directly accessible, challenging the role of experts. Top-down approaches are not as effective, as citizens seek to be included. People demand more control over their own lives in an increasingly fast-paced world.
- Change requires more flexible approaches based on greater responsiveness and rapid learning. New participatory approaches that provide more effective and innovative solutions are emerging based on deliberation, collaboration, and consensus building.

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- The command-and-control approach is limited when there is underlying, ingrained conflict among stakeholders. Mechanisms are needed to surface and manage conflicts so as to remove the barriers to effective problem solving.

Something even more fundamental appears to be happening in response to this changing environment. As Robert Axelrod and Michael Cohen point out in *Harnessing Complexity*:

Recently, there has been increasing dissatisfaction with the cost of the industrial mode of thinking and action. Its impersonality and rigidity are frustrating. Its slowness and inability to adjust to changing circumstances and local conditions have become obvious.

With the advent of the Information Age, the bottom-up style of thinking associated with Complex Adaptive Systems may well become a greater part of people's understanding of how economic, social, and political processes actually function and change.

The need for collaborative governance emerges as some of the basic premises of the industrial mode of thought become less evident. The legitimacy associated with traditional and bureaucratic authority is weakened as the inherent value of hierarchy is questioned. Instead, people are becoming more comfortable with the ideas of adaptation, experimentation, and decentralization.

*Collaborative governance solutions are often better supported and more likely to be realized.*

### **Collaborative Governance and Complex Adaptive Systems**

Collaborative governance is a complex adaptive system that is emerging to meet these new requirements for solving public problems. As described by Judith Innes and David Booher in the journal *Planning Theory and Practice*:

Governance is no longer about government but now involves fluid action and power distributed widely in society . . . Effective participation requires a systems perspective that supports and builds on the interactions among public sector agencies, non-profits, business organizations, advocacy groups, and foundations which make up the complex evolving reality of contemporary society.

A complex adaptive system continually selects from a variety of strategies to achieve desired outcomes as a result of trial-and-error learning through the interaction of individuals and organizations. Likewise, in collaborative governance, individuals and organizations use trial-and-error learning to set agendas and make decisions. Rather than attempting to achieve goals that come from a top-down authority, participants achieve desired outcomes in a more bottom-up manner, as the result of deliberation and their own selection of strategies. Citizens rather than experts play a direct role in helping to guide decentralized decisionmaking, and the solutions reached are often better supported and more likely to be realized.

The next section categorizes different forms of collaborative governance and provides real-world examples so that funders can better evaluate their grantmaking and decide which form might be most appropriate for a specific problem.

## How Collaborative Governance Works

### *Categories of Collaborative Governance*

Citizens, government, the private sector, and other interests can all take part in collaborative governance. The variety of forms the process can take, the range and scope of participation, and the many direct and indirect connections between talk and specific action make categorizing practice difficult.

Nevertheless, in order to help grantmakers better distinguish among the many different approaches, we have identified three general categories of collaborative governance and have described some of the characteristics and uses of each. The distinctions are not meant to be definitive—categories often blur—but grantmakers can use them as a general guide to collaborative governance approaches.

Because we believe an essential quality of collaborative governance is the involvement of some government actor, we have not included a large array of participatory and deliberative forms that may provide the opportunity for dialogue and community conversations but do not anticipate impacts on public decisionmaking.

The three categories are described on the following pages, with specific examples of each.



### ***1. Forums for Public Deliberation***

Such forums involve members of the public in interactive and reasoned discussions that illuminate respective points of view, encourage changes in thinking, and result in more common understandings and/or collective recommendations for action by public officials. Discussions can take place among the public alone, or they can involve public, government, and other interests. The information generated is typically intended to express the preferences of participants (or indirectly of a larger public) regarding the issues under discussion and to influence (or, in rare cases, direct) public decisionmakers. In some cases, such forums may be transformed into sustained partnerships that create ongoing or permanent committees, commissions, councils, and other partnerships through which governmental authority is delegated to a more collaborative body or process.

### ***2. Community Problem Solving***

This category refers primarily to place-based, interorganizational collaboratives consisting of community, government, and perhaps private groups who, over an extended period of time, try to address problems together. Such collaboratives may focus on creating safer and less violent communities, building new low-income housing, or planning for parks and open space facilities and use. Rather than focusing solely on agreement making, these collaboratives plan, coordinate, and implement the collective policy.

*An excellent source of information and tools for effective community problem solving is the Community Problem-Solving Project at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology ([www.community-problem-solving.net](http://www.community-problem-solving.net)).*

### ***3. Multi-Stakeholder Dispute Resolution***

More “classic” conflict resolution in form, public dispute resolution or multi-stakeholder mediation typically brings together identified stakeholder groups representing different interests and points of view (such as environmentalists, business interests, and government representatives) to reach specific agreements through negotiation and consensus building. Multi-stakeholder dispute resolution focuses on establishing common ground and reaching agreements.

### ***Examples of Collaborative Governance in Action***

The best way to describe the emerging field of collaborative governance is to provide specific examples in practice and show how they can be viewed within these different categories. The examples in this guide are drawn from collaborative governance efforts in the United States, but there are many rich examples from around the world. For more information on international collaborative governance, see the Web site of LogoLink, a global network of citizen participation organizations: [www.ids.ac.uk/logolink](http://www.ids.ac.uk/logolink).

### **Forums for Public Deliberation**

One of the first steps in collaborative governance is to identify citizen preferences through forums for public deliberation. One particular set of tools and approaches is “deliberative democracy,” which involves considering different points of view and coming to a reasoned decision. Deliberation can be used to educate the public, build stronger relationships, and promote cooperation and conflict resolution as well as provide advice for policy and action. Deliberative democracy has been used in small discus-



*Deliberative democracy encourages civic engagement by providing forums for reasoned discussion of differing points of view.*

EXAMPLES OF FORUMS FOR PUBLIC DELIBERATION

*Listening to the City in Manhattan*  
([www.listeningtothecity.org](http://www.listeningtothecity.org))  
([www.americaspeaks.org](http://www.americaspeaks.org))

*Deliberative Polling in New Haven*  
(<http://cdd.stanford.edu>)

*Citizens Jury in Washington State*  
([www.jefferson-center.org](http://www.jefferson-center.org))

sion groups as well as in large-scale settings.

Assessments of deliberative processes focus on the inclusiveness of participation and who chooses the information and experts that inform the discussion and the decision-making process.

Examples of forums for public deliberation include the following:

- *Listening to the City in Manhattan*: In July 2002, AmericaSpeaks organized a 21st Century Town Meeting in which 3,000–5,000 people engaged in a public decisionmaking process supported by keypad polling, groupware computers, and interactive television. Representative groups of citizens were recruited through a variety of means, including grassroots organizing and media. The result was a set of new citizen-sponsored ideas about how to reframe the public agenda for rebuilding after September 11, 2001.
- *Deliberative Polling® in New Haven*: Dialogues (two to three days in duration) among a random sample of residents, along with issue experts and public officials, are televised to reframe an issue in terms that reflect the views of a representative, informed public. Surveys before and after the forum measure the change in opinion that results from the deliberation. In March 2002, a local Deliberative Polling experiment was held at Yale University for the 15 towns in the New Haven metropolitan area concerning regional economic cooperation between the city and suburbs. The result was increased citizen understanding of opportunities for cooperation.
- *Citizens Jury® in Washington State*: Originated by the Jefferson Center, a Citizens Jury is a randomly selected panel of about 20 people who meet for

four to five days to examine an issue of public significance. They hear from a variety of witnesses and are able to deliberate together on the issue. On the final day of their moderated hearings, the members of the Citizens Jury present their recommendations to the public. In the state of Washington, 25 residents participated in a Citizens Jury to examine a proposed mechanism that could provide Washingtonians with more information about ballot initiatives.

- *Study Circles in Arkansas*: Groups of 8–15 people within the community or region meet regularly over a period of months to discuss a designated issue. At the end of the process, all the participants take part in a community meeting to create action strategies for the future. Study circles have focused on a wide variety of topics. In Arkansas, study circles were used to bring citizens together to talk about how taxes and tax-funded services affect them and how they could be part of building a successful tax system through a program called “Speak Up! Arkansas on Taxes.”
- *Envision Utah*: A regional public/private partnership founded in 1997, Envision Utah has achieved large-scale public participation in shaping the future of the state. Before this partnership, there was no process for citizens and local and state-level public and private institutions in the region to get together to shape a vision for growth and determine what specific steps to take to achieve that vision. The partnership has led more than 175 public meetings with more than 6,000 participants using scenario-building tools to create a shared vision for the region. In this inclusive process, Envision Utah distributed more than 800,000 questionnaires across the region to gain pub-

### EXAMPLES OF FORUMS FOR PUBLIC DELIBERATION *(cont.)*

*Study Circles in Arkansas*  
([www.educationinarkansas.com/speakup](http://www.educationinarkansas.com/speakup))  
([www.studycircles.org](http://www.studycircles.org))

*Envision Utah*  
([www.envisionutah.org](http://www.envisionutah.org))

*San Diego Dialogue*  
([www.sandiegodialogue.org](http://www.sandiegodialogue.org))

*Online Dialogues*  
([www.info-ren.org](http://www.info-ren.org))

*Citizens League Panels*  
([www.citizensleague.net](http://www.citizensleague.net))

*Neighbors Building Neighborhoods in Rochester, NY*  
([www.ci.rochester.ny.us/dcd/nbn](http://www.ci.rochester.ny.us/dcd/nbn))

lic input. The results of the Envision Utah collaborative process are now influencing state and local land use and transportation policy based on the overall regional strategy.

- *San Diego Dialogue:* A group of civic leaders asked the University of California, San Diego, to set up an independent organization to help put facts on the table and bring citizens together to discuss several regional policy issues, using a structured dialogue process to identify areas of consensus. Citizen engagement led to a better understanding of common interests surrounding core values, which in turn led to the development of a new public agenda for discussing difficult issues. From this dialogue have come a number of specific breakthroughs, including recommendations for improving border crossing infrastructure, educational reforms, and land use and transportation improvements.
- *Online Dialogues:* The Internet has created new opportunities for collaborative governance. For example, Information Renaissance, a nonprofit organization, has worked toward greater public participation in rulemaking by federal agencies since 1996, when it created the first electronic docket and conducted an online dialogue on the Federal Communications Commission's E-Rate rule. The result has been better-informed citizens as well as more effective input and deliberation with public decisionmakers in the federal rulemaking process.
- *Citizens League Panels:* One of the most common ways to engage the public is through citizens commissions or advisory boards that review an issue and make recommendations. The Citizens League of Minneapolis/St. Paul has

used the Citizens Panel approach to focus attention on specific issues such as regional tax sharing. The key to the success of these panels has been to first inform the citizens with facts, promote effective dialogue, and then identify collaborative solutions that address shared concerns.

- *Neighbors Building Neighborhoods (NBN) in Rochester, New York:* A citizen-based neighborhood planning and budgeting process allows residents to actively assist in the planning for Rochester's future. Through NBN, the city is divided into 10 planning sectors, each with its own committee of citizens representing various interests and groups. Each sector group has created a vision for its neighborhoods and has developed action plans it will implement to make Rochester a "renaissance city." The process emphasizes the development of neighborhood strengths and capacities and encourages the use of community resources. To assist citizens in their community building efforts, the NBN process also provides two core components to support citizens: the NeighborLink Network information sites and the NBN Institute. The NBN Institute is a city-sponsored educational initiative that provides citizens with informational sessions, training, and workshops.

The examples above provide the opportunity for public input into decisionmaking as well as the potential for groups to promote greater cooperation on critical issues. In the literature on deliberative democracy, this is often referred to as the difference between the "rational" and the "relationship" aspects of deliberation. Both are important, and often it is through collaboration (relationship building and communication) that better (more rational and more thoughtful) decisions are made.

*There is a growing literature on negotiation and citizen involvement in neighborhood budgeting that goes back to the 1960s when public participation was viewed as a response to top-down planning. In the late 1970s and 1980s, there were "negotiated investment strategy" experiments supported by the Kettering Foundation that engaged mediators in bringing local, state, and federal leaders together to negotiate public investments.*

*More information on community problem solving and how it can improve community development grantmaking can be found in a companion guide produced by the Hewlett Foundation, **Community Development: A Guide for Grantmakers on Fostering Better Outcomes Through Good Process.***

The challenges of inclusion and participation in these processes remain. How to ensure that all the right people have the opportunity to participate and that the processes are broadly inclusive are important questions to consider when designing forums for public deliberation.

### **Community Problem Solving**

Beyond gaining citizen input through deliberation and dialogue, another form of collaborative governance involves organizations working together with government to find solutions to community problems, often on an ongoing basis. Community problem solving usually involves actively engaging stakeholders directly in addressing specific issues. Examples include:

- *Gateway Cities Partnership, Inc.:* Twenty-one collaborative regional initiatives (CRIs) have emerged in California to address interrelated economic, social, and environmental issues in a more integrated way. These CRIs involve collaboration among civic, business, and government organizations focused on solving regional issues. An example is Gateway Cities Partnership in Long Beach, which involves civic leaders in 27 cities working together on community and economic revitalization initiatives. A major focus of the Partnership has been forging new approaches to workforce opportunities in the Latino community. After several years of building trust among diverse neighborhood groups within the region, Gateway Cities Partnership has now begun to launch a number of collaborative projects focused on skills development and neighborhood revitalization.

- *Affordable Housing Compact in Hartford:* In 1988, following passage of legislation establishing a pilot program to encourage municipalities to negotiate affordable housing plans, the state of Connecticut sponsored two projects aimed at increasing low- and middle-income opportunities. The law stipulated that affordable housing plans be adopted by consensus and provided for the involvement of professional mediators. A Hartford committee, consisting of representatives from 29 municipalities and several state agencies, worked with the mediators to negotiate a compact that included commitments from each community to supply a specific number of affordable housing units over five years. With the help of a trained mediator, consensus building went beyond information sharing and joint fact finding into problem solving.
- *Central Oregon Transportation Project:* Established by legislation in 2001, Oregon Solutions promotes community problem solving at a statewide level. The governor appoints conveners from local communities to lead teams to address problems or opportunities identified by citizens that involve an economic, community, or environmental challenge. An Oregon Solutions team of federal, state, local, and other government entities, businesses, nonprofits, and citizens contribute to the solution. Team members negotiate an integrated solution and sign a declaration of cooperation that commits their resources and time to the integrated action plan. Twenty local projects have been developed by Oregon Solutions teams. For example, Jefferson County, the Oregon Department of Transportation, the Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council, and the Central Oregon Partnership

*Community problem solving brings community organizations together with government to find solutions to community problems.*

### EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY PROBLEM SOLVING

*Gateway Cities  
Partnership Inc.*  
([www.gatewaycities.org](http://www.gatewaycities.org))  
([www.calregions.org/  
regcivic/caregnetwork  
.html](http://www.calregions.org/regcivic/caregnetwork.html))

*Affordable Housing Compact  
in Hartford, CT*

EXAMPLES OF  
COMMUNITY  
PROBLEM  
SOLVING *(cont.)*

*Central Oregon  
Transportation Project*  
([www.orsolutions.org](http://www.orsolutions.org))

*Sacramento Transportation  
and Air Quality  
Collaborative*  
([www.sactaqc.org](http://www.sactaqc.org))  
([www.csus.edu/ccp](http://www.csus.edu/ccp))

(among others) have been meeting on a regular basis since November 2002 to explore transit options. This Oregon Solutions project team is now collaborating to implement a transit plan. The transit plan will focus on commute patterns of employees of local businesses, in addition to access to critical services for residents of lower-income neighborhoods.

- *Sacramento Transportation and Air Quality Collaborative*: The metropolitan area of Sacramento County, California, is expected to grow by one million people over the next twenty years, raising questions about how the community can maintain mobility, air quality, economic prosperity, and the region's livability. To address these concerns, county officials initiated the Sacramento Transportation and Air Quality Collaborative, an ongoing, multiphase project facilitated by the California Center for Collaborative Policy. Forty-eight organizations, including environmental, business, government, and other interests, are participating in the process—from assessment of the problems to negotiation to design and implementation of “smart growth” policies.

At the beginning of any community problem solving effort, the participants must be clear about the purpose and the process. The specific problem or problems need to be well defined, and parties should decide on the rules of collaboration beforehand. Then, during the problem solving process, they can refer to the established framework in order to assess their progress and keep their efforts on course.

### Multi-Stakeholder Dispute Resolution

Multi-stakeholder dispute resolution processes typically begin when various stakeholders are headed toward, or locked into, a contentious dispute over a specific public policy problem or set of issues. Often, the stakeholders have been at odds for a long time and have deeply rooted positions. Dispute resolution brings together the interested parties, including government representatives, in discussions that begin with an attempt to enhance the participants' mutual understanding of the problem and their different perspectives. This approach to collaborative governance seeks a mutually satisfactory agreement on a common problem through a process of discussion and negotiation among participants.

Dispute resolution avoids some of the drawbacks and failures of traditional, adversarial methods for resolving conflict through the legislative process and litigation. Unlike traditional processes, in the dispute resolution process there is a better chance for full participation by the interested parties, a better chance that all relevant issues will be raised, plus a savings in time and the costs of lobbying efforts and legal proceedings, a greater likelihood that all parties will honor the agreement reached, and the building of social capital among the disputants to promote better problem solving in the future.

Multi-stakeholder dispute resolution has proven particularly useful for conflicts involving environmental issues. The following examples are drawn from a companion guide produced by the Hewlett Foundation, *Environmental Conflict Resolution: Strategies for Environmental Grantmakers*:

- *CALFED Bay-Delta Program*: In California, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program enlisted 15 state and federal agencies and more than 2,000 private stake-



*Dispute resolution avoids some of the drawbacks of adversarial methods like litigation.*

### EXAMPLES OF MULTI- STAKEHOLDER DISPUTE RESOLUTION

*CALFED Bay-Delta  
Program*  
([www.calwater.ca.gov](http://www.calwater.ca.gov))  
([www.csus.edu/ccp](http://www.csus.edu/ccp))

*Delaware Coastal Zone  
Regulatory Advisory  
Committee*  
([www.policyconsensus.org/casestudies/pdfs/de\\_balance.pdf](http://www.policyconsensus.org/casestudies/pdfs/de_balance.pdf))

*Protecting Rivers and  
Streams in Montana*  
([www.mcc.state.mt.us](http://www.mcc.state.mt.us))

holders in developing a collaborative agreement to restore ecological health and improve water management for the San Francisco Bay Delta. Especially pivotal to the dispute resolution process was the contribution of environmental advocacy groups. The agreement encompasses 70 percent of California and supports the largest ecosystem restoration in the United States.

- *Delaware Coastal Zone Regulatory Advisory Committee:* In Delaware, the governor decided to use a mediator to work out a more-than-two-decades-old dispute between industry and environmental advocates over how to implement regulations to protect the coastal zone. The governor's appointed mediator formed the Delaware Coastal Zone Regulatory Advisory Committee and invited participants from environmental groups, corporations, labor unions, and the government to join. Industry representatives sought to maintain their companies' economic viability, the environmentalists were interested in keeping the coast clean and accessible, and government officials wanted to reconcile differences and implement clear regulations. The dispute was resolved when the parties successfully negotiated an agreement on a new rule ensuring environmental improvement on the coast.
- *Protecting Rivers and Streams in Montana:* Several groups in Montana got angry when the state Department of Natural Resources and Conservation attempted to develop proposals to preserve "instream flows." These flows keep enough water in rivers and streams to protect fish, wildlife, recreation, and water quality. The parties—including ranching, farming, and environmental advocacy groups—decided to try to work together to arrive at a solu-

tion that would meet the interests of recreational users, environmentalists, and the agricultural community. The Montana Consensus Council facilitated the process by convening stakeholder representatives who were able to reach consensus on a proposal for leasing the rights to use instream water. The measure was later enacted into law.

### *Qualities of Collaborative Governance*

In his book *By Popular Demand*, John Gastil discusses public involvement in the political process and identifies basic qualities of a concept he calls “the fully democratic public voice.” We believe those qualities can also be applied to collaborative governance, and we have adapted them to fit our categories. Whatever the specific approach, collaborative governance efforts may be characterized and evaluated by the degree to which they are (1) *representative* and (2) *deliberative* while (3) discussing and offering *concrete ideas* that are (4) *taken seriously into account* by decisionmakers. We would add two additional qualities to Gastil’s list: collaborative governance approaches and solutions should also be characterized by the degree to which they are (5) *sustainable* and (6) *tied to implementation*. These qualities may be evident to varying degrees in all forms of collaborative governance; however, certain qualities may have slightly different meaning and emphasis, depending on the specific process.

*Representative.* “Representative” suggests that the many diverse voices in the community are present in the discussions. Forums for public deliberation, for example, seek more than self-selected groups of frequent public meeting attendees. Seeking diversity, some forums are open to all, while others may seek to attract underrepresented communities. Still others use random sampling to

### COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE CHARACTERISTICS

- *Representative*
- *Deliberative*
- *Offers concrete ideas*
- *Takes ideas seriously*
- *Sustainable*
- *Tied to implementation*

*“Only when voice affects actual policy decisions does it serve the public interests that sparked it and reinforce the civic habits and institutions that gave rise to it.”*

—John Gastil  
By Popular Demand

ensure that participants statistically reflect the population. Forums for public deliberation tend to seek a larger number of directly attending participants, while community problem solving approaches are often more organizationally oriented. Multi-stakeholder dispute resolution processes typically involve a limited number of participants who represent various (usually organized) stakeholder groups.

*Deliberative.* The deliberative aspect of collaborative governance is usually found in all three categories, though perhaps most clearly in public deliberation forums and multi-stakeholder dispute resolution processes. Deliberation is characterized by informed, respectful discussions that allow for an exchange of reasons, not just positions. All voices should be heard, different points of view explored, and final understandings and ideas recorded. Community problem solving processes may be more or less deliberative, depending on organizing principles and the nature of the facilitation. The use of scientific data and other background information can play an important role in all three processes.

*Concrete ideas.* Collaborative governance approaches will be most useful when their discussions get down to specifics and identify concrete ideas and options that involve difficult decisions and trade-offs. Multi-stakeholder dispute resolution processes are typically oriented to specifics, and the agreement(s) reached may represent an important public decision. Public deliberation forums and community problem solving processes will be more or less attuned to specifics, trade-offs, and real impacts on policy, depending on the approach.

*Ideas taken seriously.* With any public involvement process, it is important to be clear from the outset exactly how public comment and discussions will be used and integrated into planning and policymaking. Having an unclear or inauthentic link between public voice and decisionmaking is a sure way to make people frustrated and angry. John Gastil writes: “Only when voice affects actual policy decisions does it serve the public interests that sparked it and reinforce the civic habits and institutions that gave rise to it.” This is, of course, not the same thing as saying that local officials will or should follow all collaborative governance recommendations.

*Sustainable.* Although it is not necessary for collaborative governance initiatives to be sustainable in every case, institutionalizing these approaches is sometimes desirable and may be a goal to work toward. Sustainable collaborative partnerships occur when the tenets and practices of collaborative governance are repeated or embedded in ongoing forums that have been formally delegated with consultative, recommending, or decisionmaking authority. Sustainable partnerships may represent the ideal for collaborative governance, as they institutionalize vehicles for public voice and contribute to impacts in terms of scale and influence. Much as New England town meetings and traditional public hearings are embedded in the machinery of government, sustainable partnerships suggest that these approaches are not just occasional and episodic—when funding and champions can be secured—but simply the way good governance is done. In multi-stakeholder dispute resolution, the quality of sustainability often refers to the durability of the agreement reached by the various parties.

*Sustainable approaches are somewhat more prevalent internationally, especially in some developing countries, where a lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor and citizens’ growing disillusionment with their governments have encouraged more formal arenas, in which civil society works with the state in jointly planning, managing, and implementing public services. In these cases, legal frameworks for participation have legitimized and strengthened citizen participation. In the United States, examples of sustainability are perhaps most readily found in watershed and other environmental partnerships, certain municipal approaches to community-wide planning and budgeting, including neighborhood councils, and in some efforts to institutionalize consensus building at the state level.*

*Tied to implementation.* Ideally, the processes of collaborative governance should also be tied in some way to implementation. Each of the three collaborative governance approaches should build implementation into the content of the discussion, the problem solving strategy, or the agreement reached. In public forums, for example, moderators should encourage participants to discuss not only the merits of various policy options, but also how those policies would actually be implemented. Similarly, in dispute resolution, a good agreement will have written into it a process for implementation. By their nature, successful community problem solving efforts usually include implementation. The goal of embedding the concept of implementation into collaborative governance is to produce solutions and agreements that have a good chance of being carried out.

## What Grantmakers Can Do

*Terry Amsler and Malka Kopell*

**T**his guide discusses the emerging field of collaborative governance and provides a framework for understanding its different facets. Before we conclude, we would like to leave you with a few ideas from the Hewlett Foundation and from some of your other colleagues about how we as grantmakers can approach this field in a way that fits into our various foundations' program interests.

We want to begin by emphasizing the point that we see collaborative governance not as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. Our interest in collaborative governance is based on the convergence of several interests, including the following:

- *Solving complex problems in different issue areas:* Traditional top-down, stovepipe approaches are now no longer adequate and often lead to grid-lock. We need to design more bottom-up, collaborative approaches to address complex problems.
- *Encouraging government legitimacy, transparency, trust, and accountability:* There is growing concern that government is no longer accountable to citizens; new participatory processes are required to enhance transparency and trust while improving the quality of decisionmaking.



*Grantmakers can play a key role by making a relatively small investment at a critical moment.*

- *Promoting informed and engaged citizens who can participate more effectively in democracy:* There is a value to educating citizens about critical issues and helping them participate more fully in the democratic process.
- *Promoting greater inclusiveness, fairness, and justice:* An important part of this focus is ensuring that all individuals, especially those who typically lack a strong voice in policy matters, are included in the decisionmaking process.

Although different grantmakers may have specific priority interests in each of these areas, what is now emerging is a broader understanding of how these pieces can fit together into a set of activities leading from citizen preferences to policy results.

### **A New and Unique Opportunity for Grantmakers**

There is a new and unique opportunity for grantmakers to play an active role in helping to build stronger connections between citizens and government within different stages of the collaborative governance continuum. Most of the examples in this guide have involved the key role of grantmakers at critical moments in the design and implementation of these innovative governance approaches. Too often, there is no other institution that can support these kinds of innovations: governments are increasingly fiscally constrained and often too competitive to invest in improving the governance process, while the business community does not always see the immediate payoff from these processes. Grantmakers have a special opportunity to help design improved governance processes by engaging citizens more effectively. A relatively small investment can bring large results.

As examples, it was an initial investment by the Eccles Foundation, which leveraged additional funding from the Hewlett Foundation and other grantmakers, that helped to make Envision Utah a nationally recognized model of successful collaborative governance. Likewise, small initial investments by the James Irvine Foundation helped to seed-fund collaborative regional initiatives in more than twenty regions of California. The Rauch Foundation, a family foundation in Long Island, has provided grant support for an indicators project—the Long Island Index—that has been a catalyst for bringing together a broad coalition of citizens and leaders to address challenges in that region. The Surdna Foundation has seed-funded a number of state and regional experiments focused on livable communities that have involved the design of new governance approaches.

### **Questions Grantmakers Should Ask About Collaborative Governance**

While there is clearly a wide variety of tools and approaches inherent in a collaborative governance process, there are some important questions grantmakers can ask grantees when trying to sort out what problems need to be addressed, what tools and approaches are most appropriate for dealing with those problems, and who needs to be involved in those processes:

- *Does the problem require the involvement of citizens?* While most complex problems require the engagement of citizens as key participants to achieve a successful outcome, it is also clear that the nature of the problem should determine who actually needs to be involved and what kind of collaborative governance approach is required. Simply transplanting a successful example from another place will not necessarily lead to effective results.



- *Does the collaborative governance process require small-scale or large-scale solutions?* Some problems can be addressed on a smaller scale, using tools that are appropriate for that scale (e.g., Citizens Juries, study circles), while other problems may require large-scale solutions (e.g., 21st Century Town Meetings, deliberative polls). One size does not fit all.
- *Is collaborative governance connected to the real decisionmaking process?* Although this may seem an obvious point, too often public involvement processes are disconnected from real decisionmaking and can lead to frustration on the part of the participants. Making sure decisionmakers are included in the “upfront” deliberations is an important element for successfully connecting informal and formal processes.

Grantmakers can play an important role by working with grantees to ensure that these questions are answered and, if appropriate, addressed.

### **Avoiding Potential Pitfalls**

There are several major lessons we have learned about collaborative governance that we hope can help our colleagues avoid potential pitfalls when helping grantees to design—and work within—effective collaborative governance systems.

- *Think beyond tools:* In designing the most appropriate approach, it is important to focus on the problem or opportunity at hand, not simply the tools that are proposed to deal with it. Too often, grantmakers are presented with a proposal that contains a deliberative democracy, collaboration, or negotiation tool, but doesn’t show a clear understanding of whether this tool is

appropriate for the specific problem. For example, although a forum for public deliberation might be best in cases where a decisionmaker is trying to take the pulse of the public, the tool of multi-stakeholder dispute resolution may be more appropriate to address underlying conflict among stakeholders.

- *Promote inclusiveness:* One of the challenges with all of these approaches and tools is to ensure that everyone is at the table. Some individuals and groups, especially low-income people, are frequently left out of the deliberation and dialogue process, and special efforts need to be made to promote their inclusion and participation. Designing the most inclusive collaborative governance approach is more likely to result in successful implementation because all the parties are involved at the earliest stages of the discussion. The key lesson in designing collaborative governance initiatives is to make sure that all the players are at the table right from the start, not just at the later stages.
- *Deal with conflict:* Sometimes consensus-oriented processes fail to accurately gauge conflicting interests among participants at the beginning or to recognize emerging conflicts that arise in the course of deliberation, negotiation, or problem solving. According to Christopher Karpowitz and Jane Mansbridge, “Facilitators and members of any group must try particularly hard to find ways to ensure steady and realistic updating of participants’ understandings of one another’s values and interests.” Taking up the real disagreements that exist in a collaborative governance process, rather than

*Designing the most inclusive approach is more likely to result in successful implementation.*

placing too much emphasis “on the creation of shared values and solidarity,” will help avoid reaching inauthentic or premature consensus.

- *Avoid “democratic deficits”*: Archon Fung of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University points out four “democratic deficits” of conventional government: unstable preferences, thin representation, low accountability, and ineffective government institutions. He makes the case that many of the democratic innovations that engage citizens in collaborative governance can address “deficits” if these challenges are understood. Appropriate design should focus on who participates, how they communicate, and how they are empowered.

### **Future Directions in Collaborative Governance**

Collaborative governance is an emerging field with many experiments underway. Excitement is growing that these experiments will point toward new ways of addressing our democratic challenges. There is still more to learn and more research to be undertaken. Several collaborative governance practitioners, such as the Alliance for Regional Stewardship, the Policy Consensus Initiative, the Deliberative Democracy Consortium, the National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, the International Association for Public Participation, and the Kettering Foundation, among others, are exploring ways to support the development of innovative approaches to collaborative governance. A growing number of academic and research organizations are also studying this new field, including the Brookings Institution and the Collaborative Governance Network. In addition to support for specific experiments, one future direction for research in collaborative governance

## WHAT GRANTMAKERS CAN DO

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might be a national assessment of these innovations that collects, analyzes, and reports results on an annual basis. This could be done in cooperation with national organizations that are already working in this field.

Now is a time for experimentation and learning. Increased support by grantmakers for research and assessment of innovative governance approaches can help us answer the questions about what works, when, and why.

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## NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL RESOURCE ORGANIZATIONS

### **Alliance for Regional Stewardship**

*[www.regionalstewardship.org](http://www.regionalstewardship.org)*

The Alliance for Regional Stewardship (ARS) is a national, peer-to-peer network of regional stewards who benefit by sharing experiences and working collaboratively on innovative approaches to common regional challenges.

### **AmericaSpeaks**

*[www.americaspeaks.org](http://www.americaspeaks.org)*

AmericaSpeaks is a nonprofit organization that engages citizens in public decisions using innovative deliberative tools including large-scale town halls supported by keypad polling, groupware computers, and interactive television.

### **Brookings Institution, Metropolitan Policy Program**

*[www.brookings.org](http://www.brookings.org)*

The Metropolitan Policy Program at the Brookings Institution conducts research and supports projects aimed at redefining the challenges facing metropolitan America and at promoting innovative solutions to help communities grow in more inclusive, competitive, and sustainable ways.

### **Center for Deliberative Democracy**

*<http://cdd.stanford.edu>*

The Center for Deliberative Democracy, housed in the Department of Communication at Stanford University, is devoted to research about democracy and public opinion obtained through Deliberative Polling.

### **Collaborative Democracy Network**

*www.csus.edu/ccp/cdn*

The Collaborative Democracy Network is a network of more than seventy interdisciplinary and international scholars established to focus on the need to enhance the role of deliberative and collaborative methods in democratic governance. The goal of the network is to collaborate on research and theory building to strengthen the capacity of democratic governance institutions to produce better public policy.

### **Community Problem-Solving Project at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

*www.community-problem-solving.net*

The Community Problem-Solving Project is a Web site based at The Massachusetts Institute of Technology that provides members of the public, private, and non-profit sectors with free access to an online toolkit for community problem solving. In addition to strategy and program tools, the site also features a discussion board where users can network and learn from others involved in the community problem solving field.

### **Consensus Building Institute**

*www.workablepeace.org/main-project-who.html*

The Consensus Building Institute, Inc. (CBI), is a Cambridge-based nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the theory and practice of consensus building in government and civil society around the world.

### **Deliberative Democracy Consortium**

*www.deliberative-democracy.net*

The Deliberative Democracy Consortium is a network of researchers and practitioners working together to strengthen the field of deliberative democracy.

### **Information Renaissance**

*www.info-ren.org*

Information Renaissance is a nonprofit organization that promotes the use of the Internet to empower citizens to participate more fully in the democratic decisionmaking process.

### **Institute for Local Government**

*www.ca-ilg.org/cgi*

The Institute for Local Government is the nonprofit research and education affiliate of the League of California Cities. The Institute has established a Collaborative Governance Initiative to support informed and effective civic engagement in public decisionmaking and to assist local officials in California to successfully navigate among the growing number of community engagement options that bring the public's voice to the table on important issues.

### **International Association for Public Participation**

*www.iap2.org*

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) is an association of members who seek to promote and improve the practice of public participation in relation to individuals, governments, institutions, and other entities that affect the public interest in nations throughout the world.

### **Jefferson Center**

*www.jefferson-center.org*

The Jefferson Center is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that advocates the use of a democratic process known as the Citizens Jury.

### **Kettering Foundation**

*www.kettering.org*

The Kettering Foundation is an operating foundation that conducts research focused on the question: What does it take to make democracy work as it should? Rather than looking for ways to improve on politics as usual, Kettering is seeking ways to make fundamental changes in how democratic politics are practiced.

### **LogoLink**

*www.ids.ac.uk/logolink*

LogoLink is a global network of practitioners from civil society organizations, research institutions, and governments working to deepen democracy through greater citizen participation in local governance.

LogoLink encourages learning from field-based innovations and expressions of democracy that contribute to social justice.

### **National Civic League**

*www.ncl.org*

The National Civic League (NCL) is a nonprofit, non-partisan membership organization dedicated to strengthening citizen democracy by transforming democratic institutions. NCL fosters innovative community building and political reform, assists local governments, and recognizes collaborative community achievement.

### **National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation**

*www.thataway.org*

The National Coalition for Dialogue & Deliberation (NCDD) emerged from the October 2002 National Conference on Dialogue & Deliberation, which was held in Alexandria, Virginia, and was attended by 240 leaders in the D&D community. The Coalition has grown from 50 members at the time of the conference to more than 170 members a year later. The organizations and individuals who make up NCDD are committed to continuing to find ways to strengthen and unite the dialogue and deliberation community.

### **National Issues Forums Institute**

*www.nifi.org*

National Issues Forums (NIF) is a nonpartisan nationwide network of locally sponsored public forums and structured dialogues for the consideration of public policy issues.

### **National League of Cities**

*www.nlc.org*

The National League of Cities (NLC) has been working in the field of democratic governance for more than twenty years, in the unique position of being able to employ effective techniques to encourage and enable city officials in dialogue and inquiry around various forms of civic engagement, consensus building, collaboration, and participatory practices. NLC’s “Strengthening Democratic Local Governance” Project has focused on effective democratic participation in public life, especially the structuring of public life to facilitate and support effective participation.

### **Policy Consensus Initiative**

*www.policyconsensus.org*

The Policy Consensus Initiative is a national nonprofit program working with leaders at the state level—governors, legislators, attorneys general, state agencies, and others—to establish and strengthen the use of collaborative practices in states to bring about more effective governance.

### **Public Agenda**

*www.publicagenda.org*

Public Agenda is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization founded by Daniel Yankelovich to help American leaders better understand the public’s point of view and to help citizens know more about critical policy issues so they can make thoughtful, informed decisions. Public Agenda conducts policy research that frames issues, using polling and focus group methods.

### **Public Conversations Project**

*www.publicconversations.org*

The Public Conversations Project is a nonprofit organization that fosters a more inclusive, empathic, and collaborative society by promoting constructive conversations and relationships among those who have differing values, worldviews, and positions about divisive public issues.

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### **Study Circles Resource Center**

*[www.studycircles.org](http://www.studycircles.org)*

The Study Circles Resource Center is dedicated to finding ways for all kinds of people to engage in dialogue and problem solving on critical social and political issues. SCRC helps communities by giving them the tools to organize productive dialogue, recruit diverse participants, find solutions, and work for action and change.

### **Viewpoint Learning Inc.**

*[www.viewpointlearning.com](http://www.viewpointlearning.com)*

Viewpoint Learning develops specialized dialogues for business and public policy. The purpose of the company is to advance a new form of learning—learning through dialogue.

### **The Weil Program on Collaborative Governance**

*[www.ksg.harvard.edu/cbg/wpcg](http://www.ksg.harvard.edu/cbg/wpcg)*

The Weil Program on Collaborative Governance’s mission is to nurture a better understanding of the potential, limits, and proper realm of collaborative governance; to identify the professional skills that matter most in shaping effective, accountable collaboration in the service of common goals; and to promulgate those skills through the curricula of the Kennedy School of Government and other parts of Harvard University.

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